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ABSTRACT

Research points to numerous examples of the successes that occur when learning disabled adults are rehabilitated. For example, a study of learning disabled adults who were clients of the Arizona Division of Vocational Rehabilitation between 1975 and 1981 revealed that 64 percent of the clients had found work and remained working for two months or more. Included among the many difficulties that learning disabled adults face on the job are the following: deficient academic skills, problems learning a sequence of tasks, problems in managing time and in being on time, inefficiency and errors, clumsiness, and social skills problems. Learning disabled adults can overcome these problems. Many of them, however, need help, and many strategies are available to the vocational rehabilitation counselor for use in helping learning disabled adults. Sometimes knowing about the disability helps the rehabilitation counselor guide clients toward a job in their area of strength. Sometimes a job can be found in which the client does so well that the employer makes accommodations in order to keep a high producer on the job. Other strategies that are useful in rehabilitating learning disabled adults include vocational evaluation, remediation of specific disabilities, social skills instruction, and psychotherapy. (A glossary of types of learning disabilities and a brief bibliography conclude the pamphlet.) (MN)

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Rehabilitating the Learning Disabled Adult

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Rehabilitating the Learning Disabled Adult

by Dale Brown

Kathy, a 25-year old learning disabled woman, applied for help from vocational rehabilitation. After being evaluated, she was sent to a sheltered workshop.

"The work was quite easy," she explained. "I was the only one who could learn it quickly. It didn't take me 8 or 10 tries to learn it. If the other workers couldn't figure it out, I'd go over and say 'Why don't you try it this way?' and I'd show them my way. A lot of times, it was easier for them to do it the way I did it. The supervisors didn't like that. They felt I was taking over their job. The other workers kept looking at me as if to say, 'Why are you here?' I was kind of caught in the middle. I wasn't like the other workers, but I wasn't a supervisor."

After 13 months, she quit, much to the relief of the supervisors and clients. Later, she decided to learn horticulture. "But," she sighed, "when I went to the greenhouse, I saw it was another sheltered workshop!" Discouraged, she quit vocational rehabilitation counseling. Today, she lives at home with her parents. She receives therapy from a private practitioner, but she still does not have a vocational goal.

Fortunately, there will be fewer and fewer clients like Kathy. In January 1981, "specific learning disability" was added to the list of severe disabilities eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. (*Federal Register*, Vol. 46, No. 12, Monday, January 19, 1981, 5526). A national training conference was conducted for administrators and counselors from each state. Regional conferences are being held now.

The term, learning disability, has been used to describe a variety of problems that people have acquiring, storing, and/or retrieving information. Learning disabled people receive inaccurate information through their senses and/or have trouble processing that information. Like static on the radio or a bad TV picture, the information becomes garbled as it travels from the eye, ear, or skin to the brain. They might hear "crush" instead of "crutch" or see a mocking smile rather than a friendly smile.

In a recent program instruction (RSA–PI 81–82; July 27, 1981), learning disabilities were defined for the purposes of vocational rehabilitation. To have "specific learning disabilities," a person has to have a disorder in a psychological process involved in perceiving, understanding, or using speech or the written word. The disability could cause problems in listening, speaking, writing, spelling, or mathematics. The handicap must be diagnosed by a psychologist or physician who knows about learning disabilities. As with

other disabilities, there must be a substantial handicap to employment, and the agency must determine that vocational rehabilitation services can benefit the client.

Learning disabled people now have their own code number under which they can be recorded (#524). Before learning disabled people were accepted as a severe disability, they were often rejected unless they had another handicapping condition, such as mild mental retardation or personality and behavior disorder. Sometimes, if they could show that their learning disability was neurological, they would be accepted for services as a "disorder of the central nervous system." Even so, counselors struggled to serve this unique group.

Several states, such as Texas, California, Illinois, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Arizona, were pioneers in serving them even before the federal initiative. The Arizona Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has been working with these clients the longest. In 1970, they began to communicate with the federal government on the issue, and in 1971, they developed a specific code for learning disabled people. Learning disabled clients and vocational rehabilitation counselors from Arizona were interviewed to show successful rehabilitation of learning disabled people.

Dianne Thompson, for example, worked as a secretary at Ramada Inn. She had visual perceptual problems which caused dyslexia. When her boss was gone for the day and left written instructions, she often misread them. She had a difficult time spelling and typing letters. Even looking up words in the dictionary was a challenge, since she didn't necessarily know how to start the word. She had the same problem when she used the telephone book. Her tendency to see objects out of order (visual sequencing problems) caused her to misfile papers and write backwards.

"I had to do something."

"If you have a boss who depends on you to get out a letter to someone important and you can't write and you can't spell or compose the letter, you're not going to have the job, right?" Dianne explained. "My boss told me I had to do something or I would lose my job."

Unfortunately, her previous efforts at academic improvement had not been helpful. She failed English twice and received a "C" her third try. She struggled through four shorthand courses. "I had tried to make it through college, but I couldn't make it except for lecture classes. I could read, but I could read it over and over again and couldn't tell you what it said."

She sincerely wanted to keep the

"I liked the personalization of someone saying, 'You're not dumb. I know this seems childish, but lets see what you can learn now.'"

job. So she visited many high schools and community colleges in her area and asked their staffs for suggestions. At Arizona State University, a person from the special education department recommended that she see Bill Butler, a counselor at the Division of the Vocational Rehabilitation.

Dianne wrote him a letter and they met.

Dianne explained, "He told me about vocational rehabilitation. He made it real clear that you do the work, and they were there to help. But it all depended on you and your attitude. I really respected him for that, because that is now it should be."

Bill said, "It was clear to me that she had a substantial handicap to employment. Although she was employed, she was about to be laid off because of her handicap."

He arranged for her to be evaluated at their vocational and psychological testing unit. Her scores indicated that she had a learning disability, so he arranged for her to receive tutoring from Mary Schafer, a tutor who often worked with learning disabled adults. Dianne told her employer that she was working with vocational rehabilitation. They told her that if she was willing to work on her problems, they would keep her on the job.

Dianne described her three-times-a-week tutoring this way. "We worked on phonics. I'd look at the letter and say the sound. I felt like I was back in first grade. I enjoyed it. I liked learning. I liked the personalization of someone saying 'You're not dumb. I know this seems childish, but let's see what you can learn now. If you can't learn something, acknowledge that you don't know that. Find another way to find the information."

Dianne also learned how to spell and use the dictionary. She continued, "Mary taught me to proofread letters word for word backwards, and I caught things that I wasn't catching before. On the job, I improved. I slowed down. I wasn't as frustrated with myself and gave myself more time."

Sales Went Up 5%

She never became an excellent secretary, but the company chose to use her strengths which included her outgoing and persuasive personality. They offered her a job as sales-manager. She persuaded organizations to hold their conventions and meetings at the Ramada Inn. Sales went up 5 percent while she worked in that position.

Darold Atchison, another successfully rehabilitated learning disabled adult, has different disabilities than Dianne Thompson. He can't read at all. He has difficulty expressing himself verbally and organizing his

"I asked my boss if I could have the job permanent and he said, 'yes.' "

thoughts. It isn't easy for him to plan ahead, so he needs clear directions from his supervisors.

According to Carol McAlister, his counselor, before he was sent to rehabilitation, "He had difficulty in keeping jobs, because he wasn't given orders and wasn't told what to do. Also, he was doing jobs in the hotel and restaurant industry, which here in Arizona aren't too steady."

His mother heard about vocational rehabilitation and suggested that he visit Carol. Carol had him tested at their vocational evaluation unit, where he spent 3½ days completing work samples. Carol explained, "He tried hard and was pleasant. He had good work habits and got along well with others. His visual perception was good. He showed talent and interest at woodworking.

"He couldn't be a union carpenter where they have to take classes and pass an examination. And he couldn't handle all of the complicated things you must do if you are an independent carpenter."

She felt that the best work for him would be a job where he would do routine woodworking. He would need extra time to learn, so she decided to use the OJT (on-the-job training) program, in which employers are paid half the employees salary during the training period. "The biggest challenge," she reported "was to find an employer who was willing to do OJT." After persistant searching, she found Hines McDaniel who trained him to work in a custom-door shop.

"They showed me what to do and how to do it," said Darold. "And I just learned little by little and more and more. I didn't know nothing about making doors until I got here. Now I know how to make the door. I was on the OJT program for 3 months. I asked my boss if I could have the job permanent and he said 'yes.' " Darold has been on the job for a year and a half, since he began his training. He is a reliable employee who is proud of his work.

Positive Feedback

According to Carol, the major reason for his success is that he was placed in a situation where he could get some positive feedback. "It's a job that a flunky can't do," she said. "It created some self-esteem for him. That's half the battle, because the major problem with these disabilities is the attendant psychological problems."

Bill Butler explained, "The biggest barrier to making progress is getting these people past the feeling that they're somehow less than a good normal person. The LD people look like they don't have a disability. People have different expectations for them than someone who has an obvi-

ous physical disability. The LD people are always criticized when they are not functioning up to norm."

Mary Ann Matzdorff, who was also his client, explained what it was like not to know she was learning disabled: "I was emotionally ill, and one of the reasons was not being able to function in society. My children would bring home notices from school and ask me to fill out the forms. It would take extreme effort to fill them out. I kept leaving out endings and middles of words and I couldn't spell. I perceived myself as retarded. When I was a child, I thought that I was retarded, but my Mom wouldn't tell me.

"I also had an auditory perceptual problem. I would hear certain things that weren't necessarily being said. I would hear 'We want you to be here at a quarter past three.' What they had said was 'We want you to be here at a quarter to three.' And I'd come and they'd be gone. I became quite paranoid about people setting me up. I would always be in the wrong. I thought they were lying to me. I became suspicious of others."

Mary Ann, mother of four sons and a full-time homemaker, found out she was learning disabled when she had her children evaluated. "I mentioned to the psychologist that I could not read. He gave me a full evaluation and diagnosed me as learning disabled with severe dyslexia." Mary Ann was referred to vocational rehabilitation. One of her counselors asked her to investigate schools and tutors who could teach her to read. She chose Mary Schaeffer, and vocational rehabilitation paid for her lessons.

Her difficulty in hearing caused problems in associating sounds to letters, a prerequisite to learning to read. She described how she discovered her auditory perceptual problem: "One day, the teacher was saying the vowels to me. She would say the sound. I would repeat it. She would tell me it was wrong and say it again. Once I said it right. When she told me it was correct, I said 'You changed it!' And she said 'No, I didn't change it. You hear the sounds wrong sometimes.' That put it together for me. I realized that I had to be very careful about what I was hearing. It made me realize that people weren't doing things to me, and they weren't trying to make fun of me or belittle me. It was in my mind, not in them. It was wonderful to realize this."

With the help of her tutor, she learned to read at the age of 38. "I'm very proud of that," she said.

She enrolled in a 2-year Associate of Arts Program in Mental Health. She received a "D" in her first test in Psychology 101.

Her professor said, "You're doing

better than that. What happened?''

Her psychologist suggested that the test be read to her. When she took the test orally, she received a 99.

Like Darold, she had difficulty organizing her thoughts and planning ahead. Her tutor helped her with organizing her work. ''Sometimes, I get a sense of drifting,'' she explained. ''I get overwhelmed. How do you approach this? Which is step one? I couldn't get coordinated to go from A to B to C to D and didn't know what to do first. Mary helped me organize my approach to classwork. Now, I can organize myself fine. I haven't seen her this semester. But I did last semester.''

Mary Ann is planning to transfer to a 4-year program to earn a bachelor's degree. She has a part-time job as academic coordinator of the student government. ''My strong point is working with people,'' she said, ''and I want to work with handicapped children in a school setting.''

A Different Person

''I'm a different person now,'' she explained. ''I don't even know the other lady that I was. If it hadn't been for rehabilitation, no telling what would have happened to me. I might have been emotionally crippled for life.''

Jill Wolfe, age 20, is also a student. She is planning to become a commercial artist. She has visual perceptual problems and also has dyslexia. During highschool, her books were taped by Recordings for the Blind. Her parents approached vocational rehabilitation to find out if commercial art was a realistic field for someone with her disability. They also needed financial help to send her to college, since their family funds were depleted because of her father's heart surgery.

Carol McAlister, her counselor, explained, ''We tested her. We gathered her old records and sent her for neuropsychological tests. We found she had visual and auditory perceptual problems. We talked to some of her art teachers and people who were familiar with her talent. In terms of the commercial art field, we know that she has the personality and communication skills, so she is likely to be successful. She had come so far herself that we felt we should carry her the rest of the way.''

Jill explained her handicap this way: ''When I try to read, I tend to reverse letters and words or they disappear. Sometimes the words float up and down the page. I tend to lose my place. Also, what I hear gets confused and mixed up. I'm apt to forget words that were just said or confuse the order that they said it. Often, in classes the teacher will speak. By the time they finish one sentence, I

Examinations are read to them and given on a specific schedule so they can be taken untimed.

wouldn't remember everything they've said. I might only remember the last three words."

Consequently, it takes her longer to complete her homework. She has to tape her classes and listen and relisten to the lectures. Fortunately, in art classes, she spends most of her time creating artwork with her hands. She takes fewer classes each semester and goes to school during the summer.

Arizona State University

She attends Arizona State University, where there is an excellent program for learning disabled students. Examinations are read to them and given on a specific schedule so they can be taken untimed. Articles are reserved for them in the library so they can be read to them by library research assistants or tutors. Also, she can obtain audiovisual materials. With these reasonable accommodations, Jill received a 3.9 average and is eagerly looking forward to a career in commercial art.

Dianne, Darold, Mary Ann, and Jill had learning disabilities which were severe enough to be a substantial barrier to employment. Vocational rehabilitation helped them to become successful, employed citizens.

Research indicates that they are typical of the successes which occur when learning disabled adults are rehabilitated. For example, in California, 20 learning disabled, unemployed adults were offered psychological counseling, group therapy, and vocational counseling to help them find jobs. According to Lauriel E. Anderson, coordinator of the project, "Even before unemployment affected the general population in the mid-70's, it was extremely high for the mildly neurological handicapped (learning disabled). Such young people, if they had escaped conflict with the law, were fragmented, undirected, overly dependent, despressed, angry, and unemployed."[1]

Sharon Hoenke, the project's vocational rehabilitation counselor, explained, "these clients are often far more vocationally handicapped than they appear to be ... They don't appear to be handicapped in a physical way, but they don't have successful histories."[2]

Eight of the 20 people participated fully and improved greatly. After 2 years of help, they were working towards particular jobs, including stock clerk manager, computer operator, clerical worker, holographer (with his own business), firewood supply dealer, businessman, and grade school teacher.[3]

The University of Scranton extensively studied learning disabled adults in the State of Pennsylvania. According to its final report, "The study indicated that, upon leaving school, the

". . . it appears that learning disabled people do have difficulty finding and keeping jobs."

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learning disabled individual did have a hard time getting a job and many were dissatisfied with the job found. . . .[4] For example, 50 learning disabled adults who lived in Pittsburgh were interviewed. Seventy-six percent were unemployed and 24 percent were working."[5]

Computer Data Useful

In Arizona, Bill Butler, the rehabilitation counselor of Dianne Thompson and Mary Ann Matzdorff, wrote his doctoral thesis on the learning disabled adults who had been rehabilitated in the state. He used the computerized data bank of the Arizona Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, which had data on over 700 learning disabled clients who had applied for services between 1975 and 1981.

Bill used the computer to find useful cases for the study. He wanted to be sure that the cases were "closed" (completed, the client had either found a job or terminated counseling), that the client had a learning disability, and that he was 17 years of age or older. He located 132 such cases. The files of the clients were statistically studied. Sixty-four percent of the clients were successfully rehabilitated (meaning they found work and remained working for 2 months or more). Only two clients were employed in "special" situations, where all of their coworkers were handicapped.[6]

In these studies, it appears that learning disabled people do have difficulty finding and keeping jobs. What problems do they have on the job? Here are a few difficulties that can occur:

- *Deficient Academic Skills.* Dianne was a poor secretary because of her trouble with writing, spelling, and reading. Jill and Mary Ann needed accommodations in order to attend school that would prepare them for work. Darold's parents helped him to learn to measure wood. Other common problems include difficulty making change and using a cash register.

- *Problems Learning a Sequence of Tasks.* Supervisors report that it takes longer to train some learning disabled adults to do activities which require that tasks be done in a set order. Examples include, changing a vacuum cleaner bag, tuning a car, and getting a form signed by several people.

- *Time.* Some learning disabled adults have trouble being on time. Most people have this sense ingrained, but those who lack it often come to work late or overcompensate by coming in early. They may have difficulty with deadlines. (Mary Ann has a timer which she keeps in her pocket to help her cope with this difficulty.)

Inefficiency and Errors. When Dianne was a secretary, she made many errors. She learned various ways of coping, but as she became more careful, she slowed down. For example, when she typed a letter, she had to be sure that it included everything and that the words were spelled correctly. This took extra time. If her boss had demanded a certain number of letters per day, she would have been unable to meet production standards. She would have had to choose between carelessness and slowness, both of which would have resulted in retention problems.

Clumsiness. Some learning disabled people have poor coordination. This occurs for many reasons. Some have neurological difficulties, such as minimal cerebral palsy, while some might not perceive correctly through their sense of touch. They might have minimal associated reactions or difficulty crossing the center of their bodies with their limbs. They might have a poor sense of balance. People with visual perceptual problems often appear clumsy. For example, a man with visual perceptual problems often bumped into objects because he didn't see them in the right place.

Social Skills Problems. For some people, skills problems are part of the handicap of learning disabilities. Due to their perceptual problems, they may have trouble understanding others. A person who cannot visually discriminate between light and dark colors will be unable to see the difference between a stare and a thoughtful look. Someone who can't hear the difference between the "v" and "b" sound may be unable to tell the difference between an angry voice and an excited voice. People with auditory perceptual handicaps work so hard to understand the words of a statement, they may ignore the nonverbal meaning. This confusion can cause them to respond incorrectly.

Learning disabled adults can overcome these problems. Many of them need help, however; and there are many strategies available to the vocational rehabilitation counselor.

Diagnosis and plans for improvement are often made by many specialists.[7] For instance, in Texas, a rehabilitation counselor, a doctor, a psychologist, and an educator work together. In California, occupational therapists assist the treatment team.

Accomodations for High Producer

Knowing about the disability helps the rehabilitation counselor guide the client toward a job in his or her area of strength. Sometimes a job can be found in which the client does so well, the employer makes accommodations in order to keep a high-producer on the job. For example,

"If everyone here did more selling and less spelling, this company would be better off."

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one apocryphal encyclopedia salesman was excellent at sales. But his sales reports were disaster areas! They had misspellings. His handwriting was almost illegible. He could hardly write a grammatical sentence. And to make matters worse, his figures weren't always totalled correctly. The other salesmen, who did not like to write sales reports, asked why he was always allowed to turn in such sloppy ones. He would have been fired, but his sales were always excellent. His supervisors tried everything to help him. They made him write them over. They gave him special help. They sent him to a school to learn how to write better. Finally, they gave him the ultimate punishment, by sending him to a territory where no encyclopedias had been bought for the past 10 years. Every one in this area was reputed to be illiterate. To everyone's surprise, his sales went up. When another salesman complained about his sloppy sales report, his supervisor replied, "If everyone here did more selling and less spelling, this company would be better off."

Sometimes, vocational evaluation is needed to discover the right job and more training is needed, as occurred with Jill and Mary Ann. Accommodations need to be made in vocational and academic classrooms. For example, in courses where hands-on experience is important, the learning disabled person might need more practice time.

Many clients receive remediation of their specific disabilities. For example, in California, clients receive sensory-integrative therapy, wherein they engage in physical activities that help organize their senses. Sometimes academic skills areas are remediated. Instructors, such as Mary Schaeffer, teach reading, writing, spelling, and mathematics.

Social skills must be taught to some. They do not pick up the hidden rules of life. They need to receive accurate feedback on how their behavior influences others. This can be done individually or in groups. They might need to learn how far away to stand from someone when talking or how to enter a circle of people having a conversation. They might not have picked up appropriate tones of voice when speaking to a boss or a coworker. It is said that jobs are made or broken at "the water fountain." One intelligent, learning disabled young man got a job at the advertising department of a newspaper. He wanted to get into article writing. So he asked all of the reporters questions about their work, made suggestions on how they could improve their stories, and even offered to do an assignment for one reporter. The reporters felt his suggestions and questions

were inappropriate. The rules of "turf and territory" had to be explained to him.

Learning disabled people often develop emotional problems because of society's reactions to their learning disabilities. If a person doesn't know about the handicap, there are four logical explanations for their problems: craziness, low intelligence, not trying, and personal weakness. All four explanations lead to a low self-image which paralyzes their desire to improve.

The first step in helping such a client is often a clear explanation of their disabilities. Bill Butler says that the information is usually met with relief. "I just counseled a 35-year old man. All of his life he thought he was seriously defective. When I talked to him about my learning disabilities, he became quite tearful. Clients often start crying in my office."

Some clients need psychotherapy. Other times, the VR counselor meets with them on a regular basis to help with emotional adjustments, job placement, and social skills.

Learning disabled clients profit from vocational rehabilitation. Rehabilitation Services Administration is bravely introducing this new disability group to its list of severely disabled people, a move that should be of great help to many people (such as those described here) who previously were misunderstood and allowed to languish in inattention.

Ms Brown is a public information specialist for the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped. She represented PCEH on the National Task Force on Learning Disabled Adults in Vocational Rehabilitation.

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Types of Learning Disabilities

There are many kinds of learning disabilities and the jargon can get confusing. Following are some of the common terms and their definitions:

• Academic Difficulties: Problems with learning basic academic skills. These include:

Dyscalculia—Inability to do math.

Dsygraphia—Inability to write.

Dyslexia—Inability to read.

• Associated Reactions: One part of the body moves involuntarily because of the movement of another part of the body: for instance, the left arm may move when the right arm moves or one arm may move when the head turns.

• Auditory Perceptual Problem: Trouble taking information in through the sense of hearing and/or processing that information. People with this problem frequently hear inaccurately. A sequencing of discrimination error can change the meaning of an entire message: for example, one might hear "I ran to the car," instead of "I rented the car." People with auditory handicaps frequently do not hear unaccented syllables. They may hear "formed" instead of "performed," "seven" instead of "seventy." Some auditory perceptual handicaps are:

Auditory discrimination problem—Trouble telling the difference between similar sounds, such as "th" and "f" or "m" and "n"; hearing "seventeen" instead of "seventy"; hearing an angry rather than a joking tone of voice.

Auditory figure-ground problem—Trouble hearing a sound over background noise, for example, being unale to hear the telephone ring when one is listening to the radio, or having difficulty hearing someone talking at a party when music is playing.

Auditory sequencing problem—Trouble hearing sounds in the correct order, for exmaple, hearing "nine-four" instead of "four-nine"; hearing "treats" instead of "street"; hearing garbled music because the melody is perceived out of order.

• Catastrophic Response: An involuntary reaction to too many sights, sounds, extreme emotions or other strong stimuli. This may result in losing one's temper, becoming dazed or unaware of one's surroundings, or "freezing" for a short time.

• Cognitive Disorganization: Difficulty thinking in an orderly, logical way. People with this problem often jump to conclusions and have difficulty planning tasks.

• Crossing the Midline: Trouble with moving one's limbs across the center

of the body. This could include: difficulty writing across a page, sweeping a floor or controlling a steering wheel.

- Directional Problem: Trouble automatically distinguishing left from right; learning north, south, east, west; learning the layout of a large symmetrical building.
- Disinhibition: Difficulty in behaving appropriately in an automatic way. This is a problem with the self-governing part of the brain that stops one from doing such things as laughing at the wrong time, talking aloud to oneself, coughing without covering the mouth. A disinhibited person might abruptly interrupt a conversation or talk aloud to himself in public.
- Intersensory Problem: Trouble using two senses at once or associating two senses, for instance, not realizing that the letter "d" which is seen, is the same as the sound "d" when it is spoken; being unable to feel someone tap you on the shoulder while you are reading; being unable to listen to conversation and drive at the same time.
- Memory Problem, Short-term: Trouble remembering: names, numbers, specific facts, what happened a few minutes ago. A poor memory makes academic success difficult.
- Motor Problem: Trouble moving one's body efficiently to achieve a certain goal. Some motor problems are:

Perceptual motor problems—Trouble performing a task requiring coordination because of inaccurate information received through the senses. This may result in clumsiness, difficulty in participating in simple sports, awkward or stiff movements.

Visual motor problem--Trouble seeing something and then doing it: learning a dance step while watching a teacher, copying something off a blackboard, throwing something at a target.

Auditory motor problem—Trouble hearing something and then doing it: following verbal directions, dancing to a rhythmic beat, taking notes in a lecture.

- Perceptual Problem: Trouble taking information in through one's senses and/or processing that information.
- Proprioceptive Perceptual Problem: Trouble knowing where one is in space. A person with this problem might not be able to tell the position of her limbs with her eyes closed.
- Soft Neurological Signs: Signs of central nervous system dysfunction that can be observed: staring, turning the head instead of moving the eyes, inability to look people in the eye, not holding the head straight, being easily startled.

• Tactile Perceptual Problem: Trouble taking information in through the sense of touch. Some tactile handicaps are:

Immature tactile system—People with this problem dislike being touched lightly, but crave pressure touch, such as being hugged hard or huddling with knees to their chest. Until the immaturity is overcome, tactical discrimination cannot develop.

Tactical defensiveness—Tendency to avoid being touched because of an immature tactile system.

Tactile discrimination problem—Trouble feeling the difference between similar objects, such as bond or regular typing paper, light or heavy sandpaper, silk or cotton, ripe or unripe cantaloupe.

Tactile pressure problem—Trouble judging the right amount of pressure needed to perform motor acts: holding an egg in two fingers without breaking or dropping it, tapping someone playfully rather than hitting them.

• Vestibular Perceptual Problem: Problem with one's sense of balance, for example, a tendency to lose one's footing on a curb.

• Visual Perceptual Problem: Trouble taking information in through the sense of sight and/or processing that information. Some of these are:

Visual figure-ground problem—Trouble seeing a specific image within a competing background: finding a face in a crowd, finding keys on a crowded desk, picking out one line of print from the other lines in a book. People with this problem cannot see things that others can see; to them the keys on a crowded desk are not there.

Visual sequencing problem—Trouble seeing things in a correct order, for instance, seeing letters or numbers reversed, seeing two cans reversed on a shelf of cans. The person with this problem actually sees the word incorrectly. He sees "was" instead of "saw."

Visual discrimiantion problem—Trouble seeing the difference between two similar objects, such as, the letters "v" and "u" or "e" and "c"; the difference between two shades of one color or two similar types of leaves. The person with this problem sees the two similar objects as alike.

Depth perception problem—Trouble perceiving how far away (or near) an object may be: for instance, you may not know how close the fork is to your hand or how far to reach to put a glass of water on the table.

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Bibliography

For more information, write:

Closer Look, P.O., Box 1492, Washington, D.C. Provides a packet on learning disabilities with information on groups in your state. Also distributes a free self-remediation handbook for learning disabled adults entitled "Steps to Independence for People with Learning Disabilities".

ERIC Clearninghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091. Provides the following free factsheets "Learning Disabilities," "Post-Secondary Options for Learning Disabled Students," and "Vocational Education for Learning Disabled Students."

HEATH Resource Center, 1 Dupont Circle, Suite 780, Washington D.C. 20036. Distributes material on learning disabled people in post-secondary education including a factsheet called "Learning Disabilities."

National Network of Learning Disabled Adults, PO Box Z, East State Texas Station, Commerce, *TX 75428.* This network of self-help groups will provide a national list of such groups.

Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities 4156 Library Road, Pittsburgh, *PA 15234.* This group of parents of learning disabled people answers inquiries from the public.